



Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

To: Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

Tracking No.: 25/0005401

Date: 19/03/2025

From: Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water

Subject: Outcomes of the 2024 Independent review of ACT Government action on climate change

Critical Date: 28/03/2025

Critical Reason: To agree next steps for action by EPSDD.

- DDG, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction 20/03/25

Recommendations

That you:

1. Note the 2024 Independent review of ACT Government action on climate change by Rooftop Social at Attachment A; and

Noted / Please Discuss

2. Agree to the next steps proposed by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD), including progressing a government response to the review recommendations for Cabinet consideration and, subject to Budget outcomes, developing a new Climate Change Strategy.

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

Suzanne Orr MLA

06/04/25

Minister's Office Feedback

Background

1. The [Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010](#) (the Act), requires you as Minister to, at least once every five years, ask an independent entity to assess and report to you about government policies, programs and practices to address climate change in the ACT, including actions taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change (Part 3, 15A).
2. In mid-2024, Rooftop Social and the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney were engaged to review ACT Government action on climate change (the Review) to fulfil this requirement.
3. The purpose of the Review was to evaluate and report on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the ACT Government's vision, strategies, policy, program and budget settings, and existing evaluation processes on climate action over the previous five years.
4. Project governance included ACT Government members across different directorates:
 - A Steering Committee which provided Senior Executive strategic direction and oversight into the project scope, process and outcomes.
 - A technical working group which provided subject matter expertise, technical advice, input and regular feedback for the project.
5. This Review was not a detailed audit or evaluation of individual climate-related policies and programs in the ACT. The review investigated the appropriateness of overarching frameworks and was only able to draw conclusions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of climate actions in the ACT where relevant evaluation findings are available. This review was designed to be cognisant of, and build upon, previous evaluations of legislation, programs and policies, and not duplicate these efforts. The scope of the review was influenced by the funding available.
6. EPSDD accepted the final report for the Review from the consultants in February 2025. It is provided at [Attachment A](#).

Issues

7. The review found the ACT has strong foundations to deliver net zero emissions and strengthen climate resilience but identified areas for further work. A summary of the Review findings is at [Attachment B](#). There are two key themes in the recommendations:
 - a. create a new version of the ACT Climate Change Strategy with some key focus areas; and
 - b. facilitate further coordination and partnerships to allow the sharing of expertise and involvement from the broader ACT community to achieve our climate action goals.
8. Considerations recommended for the next version of the ACT Climate Change Strategy include:
 - a. updating the ACT's climate vision, targets and goals informed by climate science;

- b. consolidating all relevant targets and goals related to climate action into a single document or location;
 - c. integrating financial considerations such as valuing emissions reductions into government climate-related decisions;
 - d. incorporating annual climate-related financial disclosure statements; and
 - e. establishing the next climate change strategy as a legislative requirement, through an amendment to the Act.
9. The Review also recommends facilitating coordination, building partnerships, sharing expertise and greater involvement from the broader ACT community by:
- a. strengthening climate action-related Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) practices across all Directorates, embedding learning and improvement practices into ACT climate actions, not just monitoring and reporting;
 - b. establishing an ACT Climate Ecosystem as an open network of climate experts, to leverage the depth of climate expertise across the ACT;
 - c. establishing a Climate Community Partnership Framework to help formalise and resource collaboration between the ACT Government and community groups, and
 - d. identifying and prioritising opportunities for social and wellbeing strategies to align with climate actions to deliver co-benefits.

Next Steps

10. Work has begun with relevant stakeholders across ACT government to develop positions on the Review recommendations. A Cabinet package is proposed for mid-2025 to include the findings of this review; a Government response; and a proposed approach for the next climate change strategy for the ACT. The scope for the next strategy is subject to the outcomes of the forthcoming 2025-26 Budget bid *Climate Change Action and Energy statutory functions*, and the Cabinet submission on ACT emissions projections towards net zero emissions by 2045 (25/131).
11. Early consideration of the next climate change strategy is underway. [Attachment C](#) provides a potential concept and approach for your consideration. The approach proposes a high-level mitigation and adaptation framework which establishes guiding strategic principles, brings together existing plans and strategies, identifies gaps and next steps for Government policy and action.
12. The Review notes that more work is required around climate adaptation. This is proposed as a focus of the next climate strategy:
- a. Due to slow progress in reducing global carbon emissions, the ACT needs to prepare for the potential for a 2 to 4°C warmer world in coming decades. The

Territory will experience more frequent and intense extreme weather events, including heat waves, fires, extreme storms and changes in rainfall patterns, including extended periods of drought.

- b. Although the ACT has had some adaptation plans and accompanying actions (e.g. the Living Infrastructure Plan, the Disaster Resilience Strategy), they are not comprehensive or well-integrated due to their singular focus on particular sectors or aspects of climate adaptation.

13. Should appropriate budget funding be received, development of a new climate change strategy could proceed along the following timeline:

- a. establishment of governance, scope and approach (Q2 2025),
- b. public consultation (Q3-4 2025),
- c. cross government discussions and finalisation of draft strategy (by Q1-2026),
- d. ERC and Cabinet consideration of strategy and associated business cases (by Q2 2026), and
- e. announcement, communications and commence implementation (by Q3 2026).

Financial Implications

14. Funding requested as part of the *Climate Change Action and Energy statutory functions* 2025-26 business case will be essential for the development of a new climate change strategy.

Consultation

Internal

15. The following teams participated in workshops and meetings as a part of the review: Climate Change, Energy and Water, including Policy and Program representation, Environment and Heritage, and Planning.

Cross Directorate

16. The following teams participated in workshops and meetings as a part of the review: previous Office for Climate Action; Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Transport Canberra and City Services (including NoWaste), ACT Health, Canberra Health Services, Justice and Community Services, and Community Services Directorate.

External

17. The following participated in the external stakeholder interviews with the consultants: the ACT Climate Change Council; ACT Council of Social Services, ACT Business Chamber and ACT Environment Groups (See-Change, Canberra Environment Centre and Conservation Council ACT Region)

Work Health and Safety

18. Nil.

Benefits/Sensitivities

- 19. The Review has provided an independent assessment of opportunities the Government can undertake to continuously improve and adapt the ACT to prepare for the impacts of climate change and deliver net zero emissions by 2045.
- 20. The Review identifies areas requiring further action which may be perceived as a deficiency in the current government response to climate change.

Communications, media and engagement implications

- 21. It is anticipated the Report and the government response will be published together after Cabinet approval later this year. A communications plan and associated communications material will be prepared to support the publication.
- 22. A strategic communications and engagement strategy will be prepared to support community consultation for the development of the next ACT climate change strategy. Design of the engagement strategy will also consider stakeholder feedback from the Integrated Energy Plan consultation where we have engaged significant with key stakeholders and focus areas. The communications and engagement strategy will be included in the next Cabinet package with the proposed approach for the next climate change strategy.

Signatory Name: Fiona Wright Phone: 02 6207 9780
 Action Officer: Anith Abraham Phone: 02 6207 5263

Attachments

Attachment	Title
Attachment A	Final report - Independent review of ACT Government action on climate change
Attachment B	Recommendations from 2024 Independent review of ACT Government action on climate change
Attachment C	Early concept: climate change strategy